

Maine

2001 Natural Resources Conservation Activities Report



Overlooking the Sprague River from Morse Mountain

The first phase of a salt marsh restoration project at the Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area has been completed.

Dear Maine Citizens:

Landowners in Maine continue to demonstrate their commitment to land stewardship in many ways! Maine NRCS is pleased to present you with just a few examples of how NRCS is assisting landowners to leave a legacy of conservation on our landscape. I encourage you to take a few minutes to read this report to better understand the commitment and dedication of the conservation partnership.

NRCS works with Maine's 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 5 Resource Conservation and Development Councils, Maine Department of Agriculture, other federal and state conservation partners, and non-governmental organizations to conserve, improve, and sustain natural resources in Maine. The partnership's commitment to conservation provides a solid foundation to a locally-led program delivery system. The partnership is also committed to a voluntary, incentive-based approach to private land stewardship and conservation treatment.

I extend my appreciation to individual land users whom, as stewards of the working lands in Maine, have voluntarily invested their time and money to assure a productive and healthy future for the resources they manage. The benefits of their actions enhance the quality of life for the entire population in Maine. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the conservation partnership members and NRCS employees for their accomplishments and commitment to ensuring future generations enjoy a quality environment.

Sincerely,



RUSSELL A. COLLETT
State Conservationist



Russell A. Collett

NRCS Mission

To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

NRCS Vision

Harmony between people and the land.

Washington County Soil Survey Completed

The Washington County Soil Survey is now completed. The survey, which covers over 950,000 acres, has been ongoing for about 15 years. People representing many different landowners and organizations have been involved directly and indirectly with the survey over this period of time. When the published soil survey becomes available, it will furnish soil maps and interpretations needed in giving technical assistance to farmers; in guiding other decisions about soil selection, use, and management; and in planning research and disseminating the results of the research.

With the completion of this survey area, Maine is 82 percent surveyed.

Resource Conservation and Development

There are five funded Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) areas that encompass all 16 counties in Maine. They are the St. John Aroostook, Down East, Heart of Maine, Time and Tide, and Threshold to Maine. RC&D areas help people in rural communities to carry out activities that: (1) increase the conservation of natural resources, (2) support economic development, and (3) enhance the environment and standard of living. Led by an NRCS RC&D Coordinator, local government and business partners work together to solve community problems.

In Maine, 178 RC&D projects were completed during fiscal year 2001. A total of \$461,622 was allocated for the RC&D program through NRCS. These funds provided leverage for \$2,932,100 in additional funding from other sources.

Outreach Efforts Successful

Outreach and education to groups and individuals are a priority for NRCS. Employees are proud to offer our programs and services to all citizens and to educate them about natural resources. The following are examples of such efforts:

- An NRCS Soil Resource Specialist gave a soils workshop to young adults participating in the Oikos Project in urban Portland. Participating in the workshop were three young former refugees from Sudan as well as a program leader and an environmental sciences student. The location of the workshop was at Kennedy Park, a low-income housing development where many former refugees have relocated from Sudan, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Thailand, etc. The mission of the Oikos Project is youth empowerment and community service and the young adults spend a lot of their time in the community gardens managing crops and outletting the products to the Portland Public Market.



Through these efforts the group received an overview of the nature and properties of soils, insight into human activities that negatively impact soil and some hands-on experience on how they can learn and do more to help. The students gained an appreciation for soil resources and the importance of them in an urban environment.

- The Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) developed a Gardening Assistance Program (GAP) for local non-profit organizations. The purpose of this program is to increase the public's awareness and understanding of agriculture, and to promote small-scale gardening in Hancock County communities.

The GAP program provided financial and technical assistance to the After School Program at the Mount Desert Island YMCA. The 26 children in the After School



Program helped enlarge a small garden and participated in hands-on educational activities such as exploring the compost pile, germinating seeds, growing seedlings in pots, planting seeds and seedlings in the garden, and proper watering techniques. Seedling and seed

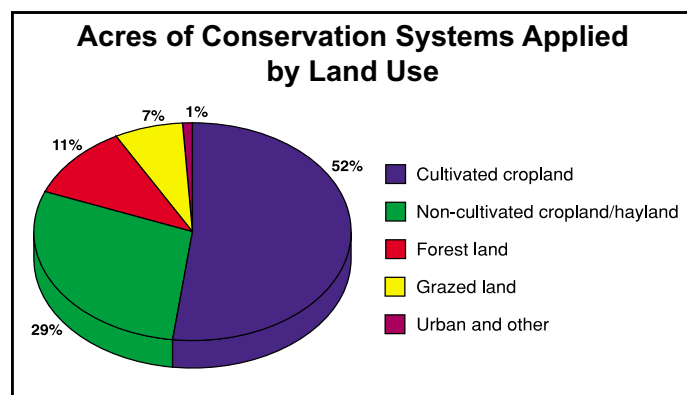
donations were made by local farms. The District provided the soil test and analysis, soil amendments, seedlings and seed. Labor was donated by the SWCD and NRCS. The children were very excited about the heavy production and large plants in the garden. It is envisioned that the project can network with the Master Gardeners program for on-site assistance and expertise.

Performance Results for Fiscal Year 2001

Conservation Systems

Systems that address all soil, water, air, plant and animal resource concerns are called Resource Management Systems (RMS). Other conservation systems applied at less than the RMS level usually focus on resolving a particular resource concern, i.e., an erosion problem, water quality problem, etc.

Acres Applied:	
to RMS	29,536
to Other Conservation Systems	5,980
Total Acres Applied	35,516



Acres of Conservation Treatment

Conservation Buffers	468
Treated with Erosion Control Measures	7,359
Irrigation Management Systems	1,546
Nutrient Management Applied	31,029
Pest Management Systems	14,493
Prescribed Grazing	2,844
Tree and Shrub Established	128
Tillage and Residue Management Systems	1,274
Wetlands Created or Restored	132
Wildlife Habitat Management	4,089
Total Acres of Conservation Treatment	63,362

Conservation Technical Assistance Key to Satisfied Customers

America's farmers and ranchers say they are satisfied with the conservation technical assistance (CTA) they receive from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). The purpose of the CTA program is to assist land-users, communities, units of state and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems. The purpose of the conservation systems are to reduce erosion, improve soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture condition, reduce upstream flooding and improve woodlands.



The objectives of CTA are to:

- ⑧ Assist landowners in meeting goals for resource stewardship and assist individuals to comply with State and local requirements. Assistance is provided to land users voluntarily applying conservation and to those who request assistance to comply with local or State laws and regulations.
- ⑧ Provide technical assistance to landowners. NRCS assistance to landowners begins and ends with CTA program funds. CTA program funds also provide technical assistance to landowners who choose not to use USDA financial assistance or are using cost-share programs appropriated by state and federal programs.
- ⑧ Collect, analyze, interpret, display, and disseminate information about the condition and trends of the Nation's soil and other natural resources so that people can make good decisions about resource use and about public policies for resource conservation.
- ⑧ Develop effective science-based technologies for natural resource assessment, management, and conservation.

According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), landowners who received CTA in the last year gave CTA a satisfaction rating of 81 out of a possible 100 points. This rating is 10 points higher than Americans rate private sector services and more than 12 points higher than the index for Federal government services. Users of CTA feel they can rely on the assistance they get, giving CTA a trust index of 90 out of 100 points.

This success leads landowners to expect the same high-quality service in the future. The Index shows that users of CTA have high expectations that they will receive good service (80 out of 100 points). Users of CTA value its convenience, usefulness, accessibility, and clarity, as well as the courtesy and professionalism of the employees providing CTA.

It is a challenge to keep up this level of service while administering an array of other conservation programs on the nation's private lands. Mandated activities in the 1985 and 1996 farm bills caused NRCS to redirect increasing percentages of its resources away from voluntary CTA. Further dilution of resources available for conservation technical assistance could jeopardize the effectiveness of this program and its favorable view in the eyes of America's landowners.

To learn about NRCS in Maine, visit our website at:
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